

Allen-Wright Furniture Company
(Standard Furniture Company)
817-819 West Bannock Street
Boise
Ada County
Idaho

HABS No. ID-114

HABS
ID,
1-BOISE,
28-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Western Region
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California 94107

HABS
ID
1-BOISE
28-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

ALLEN-WRIGHT FURNITURE COMPANY (STANDARD FURNITURE CO.)

HABS NO. ID-114

Location: 817-819 West Bannock Street
Boise, Ada County, Idaho 83702

U.S.G.S. Boise South Quadrangle (7.5)
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:
1/5, 64, 390/48, 29, 490

Present Owner: Capital City Development Corporation
P. O. Box 987
Boise, Idaho 83701

Present Occupant: Vacant.

Present Use: None. The building is scheduled for demolition.

Statement of Significance: The Pierce and Company Allen-Wright building was listed as eligible for the National Register as a part of the Tourtellotte and Hummel Architecture in Idaho Thematic Group; it was listed as Site #56. The building is architecturally significant as a handsome example of, and the only one in the thematic group, of the effect of height and modernity for which Boise business blocks were reaching between 1905 and 1910. The strikingly tall Pierce and Company Allen-Wright building stood out in stark contrast to the surrounding one story commercial buildings and to the typical two story taller commercial buildings of its time. Additionally, its classical facade with vertical bands of inset windows represented a striking departure from the typical picturesque facades of contemporary and earlier commercial structures.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. **Date of erection:** The building was erected in 1909. It is mentioned in Boise, Idaho, Statesman articles dated August 18, 1909, p. 5, C.4 and November 8, 1909, p. 5, C.1-2 with a drawing. The Allen-Wright Furniture Company is listed at this address in the Boise City Directory published by Polk and Company for 1909-1910.
2. **Architect/Builder:** The building was designed by Tourtellotte and Company. It was built by Pierce and Company, a real estate and development company owned by Walter Pierce. It was built for the Allen-Wright Furniture Company, a wholesale and retail furniture business.
3. **Original and subsequent owners:** The original owner was Walter Pierce. Lot 8 of Block 44 of the Boise City Original Townsite, the site on which the Pierce and Company Allen-Wright building was constructed, and the adjacent lot to the west, Lot 7, were purchased by W. E. Pierce, John M. Haines, and L. H. Cox from Isabella E. Morse, Charles Wesley Morse, Charles B. Little and Lauretta M. Little for the sum of \$17,500. The purchase was recorded by way of a deed dated September 1, 1909. On December 5, 1911, Mr. Pierce, Mr. Haines, and Mr. Cox, in conjunction with their wives, sold the two lots plus the now completed Pierce and Company Allen-Wright building to the W. E. Pierce and Company for the sum of \$125,000. The building and land (Lot 8) were sold on July 27, 1920 to Mary S. Haines, widow of John M. Haines. No sales price was recorded; however, it was indicated that there was existing mortgage debt in the sum of \$30,000 on the property.

The estate of Mary S. Haines sold the property to O. H. Allen on June 23, 1937 for the sum of \$27,000. It is noted in the deed that the sale was subject to a lease to Standard Furniture Company. The Estate of Mary D. Allen, deceased, sold the property to Investors Trust, Inc., a

corporation, on June 30, 1961 for the sum of \$45,000. Investors Trust, Inc. subsequently transferred their rights to Standard Building Company, Inc. on July 5, 1962.

There is an additional record of a transfer by Quitclaim Deed of an interest held by Boise Blue Print Company, the sole tenant in the building, to Standard Building Company, Inc. whose office was located in the building. This transfer occurred on May 25, 1973.

The final conveyance was also recorded on May 25, 1973 when Standard Building Company, Inc. transferred it's interest to the Boise Redevelopment Agency.

4. **Builder, contractor, suppliers:** Pierce and Company constructed the building. The stone cornices above the first and the fourth floors are thought to be of local quarry. The sources of other construction material, suppliers, and sub-contractors is unknown.
5. **Original plans and construction:** The structure remains essentially unaltered except for the addition of a black glass surfacing material over the first floor pilasters. This glass is etched with the "S" logo of the Standard Furniture Company, the successors to the Allen-Wright Furniture Company. No record of original plans or contracts have been located; however, the design project is noted in the Hummel, Jones, Miller, Hunsucker P.A. Certificate book, collector book and drawing loan book references from 1910. The Idaho Statesman articles and sketch noted in paragraph 1 should be noted. The structure is reported to have cost \$30,000.00.
6. **Alterations and additions:** There appear to have been no significant alterations or additions to the structure.

B. Historical Context:

Walter Pierce was a prominent Boisean whose real estate and development company was responsible for the construction of a number of commercial buildings in downtown Boise during the early years of the twentieth century. The Allen-Wright Furniture Store building was notable at the time of its construction for its impressive height. The Idaho Statesman stated that the building was "practically a five-story

structure, besides the big basement" (Boise Idaho Statesman, August 18, 1909, p. 5, C.4). To this day, the structure stands out among the surrounding one-story buildings. The building continued to be occupied by furniture stores, the Allen-Wright Furniture Company, and then its successor, The Standard Furniture Company until approximately 1965. At that time it was occupied by Boise Blue Art Supply who utilized the first floor and the mezzanine only. The other floors remained vacant. Boise Blue moved from the building in 1978, and it has been vacant since.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

The Pierce and Company, Allen-Wright Building is a four story, 50-by-122-foot mid-block brick structure with stone trim. The first floor contains a mezzanine that wraps the east, south, and west sides of the structure. The mezzanine is accessed by a double wide stairway that runs from the center of the first floor to the south side of the mezzanine. The south portion of the main floor is partitioned from the balance of the floor. Originally, the front portion of the first floor and the mezzanine were utilized as retail sales floors, the basement was a repair and storage area, and the upper floors were warehouse space. The upper three floors are open plan warehouse floors that are interrupted only by columns and by the elevator shaft and adjacent stairway.

1. **Architectural character:** The Allen-Wright Furniture Store is architecturally significant. "The Allen-Wright Furniture Store is architecturally significant as a handsome example, and the only one in the Thematic Group, of the effect of height and modernity for which Boise business blocks were reaching between 1905 and 1910. At the turn of the century, even a large commercial project such as the Romanesque revival Union Building (National Register, March 12, 1979) was two stories tall behind a long picturesque facade. Within a few years such four-story projects as the lost Yates and Building and Overland (later the Eastman) Building (National Register, September 21, 1978) became the mode. The stylistic treatment of these big blocks was as much a change as their height; they were far more classical in spirit. The Pierce and Company building relates, in particular,

to the Wainwright Building in its use of vertical bands of inset windows. The lost 1902 Queen Anne commercial Pierce Building, with its two polychromatic brick stories and its corner turret, is an effective marker against which to measure the change represented by the 1909 Pierce/Allen-Wright block. The later building is perfectly symmetrical, smooth and restrained in surface. It appears to be 'practically a five story structure,' as the newspaper said, because of its tall mezzanine and first floor and the pilasters which rise uninterrupted from the top of the mezzanine lights to the cornice."

2. **Condition of fabric:** The condition of the structure would have to be considered as poor. Significant water damage has occurred to the roof and the structural frame. The exterior brick work along the west, south, and east sides of the parapet is loose, and portions of it are observed to be falling off the building.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. **Overall dimensions:** The structure is 50 feet by 122 feet, which is divided into five bays across the front. It is four stories high with a mezzanine included in the first floor. The structure has a full basement below grade.
2. **Foundation:** The structure rests upon a poured concrete foundation which forms the perimeter wall for the basement. The water table in the general area of the structure is at about 25 to 30 feet below the surface; therefore, the basement is generally dry except for the effects of water leaking in from above.
3. **Walls:** The exterior is primarily constructed of red brick laid in regular courses, and they are one-half offset. There are two plain sandstone belt courses on the front of the structure, one above the caps of the first floor pilasters and a larger one above the fourth floor corbel table. Additionally, plain stone was used to form the lintels and sills for the windows.

The front is divided into five bays by brick pilasters. The pilasters are cupped at the top of the fourth floor by a complex corbel table.

4. **Structural systems, framing:** The building's main and secondary structural system is comprised of square wood columns and beams. All internal partition framing is made of 2 inch by 4 inch wood. The floor and roof joists likewise consist of wooden timbers. The floor joists are decked with one inch by four inch tongue and groove wooden planks.
5. **Openings:**
 - a. **Doorways and doors:** The primary building entrance is on the north side of the first floor; it is centered in the middle bay. The entrance is secured by a pair of glass paneled, plain, heavy wooden doors which are recessed from the street inside a leveled, glass show window lined inset. The rear of the building is serviced by a series of single doors located in the center bay of each floor.
 - b. **Windows:** The windows are double-hung sash windows on the upper three floors of the building's front and on all four floors of the building's rear. The first floor of the building's front aspect is enclosed by a series of six plate glass windows along the sidewalk line and turning into the recessed entry area. These are topped by a row of tall, rectangular fixed windows, four panes per bay, at the mezzanine level.
6. **Roof:**
 - a. **Shape, covering:** The roof is flat, and it pitches toward the south (rear) of the structure. The roof is covered with a modified bitumen built-up roofing system.
 - b. **Cornice, eaves:** The cornice is constructed of brick capped with stucco. Drainage is provided by roof pitch toward the rear of the structure where it exits the roof by means of penetrations in the cornice and runs into metal pipes.
 - c. **Dormers, cupolas, towers:** A brick structure is constructed to house the elevator hoist mechanism and to provide access to the roof. This elevator

housing is located above the center bay toward the rear of the structure.

C. Description of Interior:

1. **Floor Plans:** See sketch plans following.
2. **Stairways:** The stairway from the first floor to the mezzanine is about twelve feet wide with a simple, heavy top rail and supporting 2 inch by 2 inch slats. It is covered with vinyl composition all in a green and white checkerboard pattern. The stairway from the mezzanine to the fourth floor is a simple 42 inch wide wooden stair with no ornamental features.
3. **Flooring:** The first floor and mezzanine floors are covered with vinyl tiles in a green and white checkerboard pattern. All other floors are bare.
4. **Wall and ceiling finish:** The interior walls on the first floor and the mezzanine are finished with painted lath and plaster. The walls are painted off-white. The upper floor walls are comprised of exposed brick except for the elevator shaft, which is covered with lath and plaster.
5. **Openings:**
 - a. **Doorways and doors:** All interior doors are simple, wooden, five-panel solid core painted doors with simple brass knobs and hinges.
 - b. **Windows:** There are no interior windows.
6. **Decorative features and trim:** There are no notable interior decorative features.
7. **Mechanical equipment:**
 - a. **Heating:** The heating plant has been removed from the building. It appears that it consisted of a coal fed boiler that was located in the southwest corner of the basement. It supplied heat to the upper floors via piped steam which ran through

radiators.

- b. **Lighting:** The existing lighting fixtures are mostly of more recent age. There are no notable fixtures in the structure.
- c. **Plumbing:** All plumbing fixtures have been removed from the structure. The restroom facilities consist of two toilet rooms which were located toward the rear of the first floor.
- d. **Elevator:** There was a single elevator car that serviced all floors in the building. It was a freight sized car with an open front. It was located in the center bay to the rear of the building. It appears to have been hoisted by means of a steel cable that was driven by an electric motor.

8. **Original furnishings:** None remain.

D. Site:

- 1. **General setting and orientation:** The structure faces north, and it is located in a downtown commercial district. All surrounding terrain is relatively flat. The building is fronted by a concrete public sidewalk, and it is approached via an asphalt paved public street. The rear of the structure opens onto an asphalt paved public alley. The building covers the entire site, and there is no landscaping.

PART III. SOURCE OF INFORMATION

A. Original Architectural Drawings:

These drawings were not located. The Tourtellotte and Company archives are in the possession of Hummel, LaMarche & Hunsucker Architects, P.A., Boise, Idaho, and their archives search produces no drawings.

B. Historic Views:

A sketch of the building facade was located in the (Boise) Idaho Statesman, November 8, 1909, p. 5, c. 1-2 located in the

Idaho State Historical Society Historical Library and Archives.

C. Interviews:

An interview with Mr. Jack L. Robinson of Boise Blue Art Supply, the last occupant of the building, was conducted in Boise, Idaho in 1989.

D. Bibliography:

1. **Primary and unpublished sources:** Ada County, Idaho; Book of Deeds.

Boise, Idaho. Hummel Jones Miller Hunsucker P.A. Certificate book, collection book and drawing loan book references 1910.

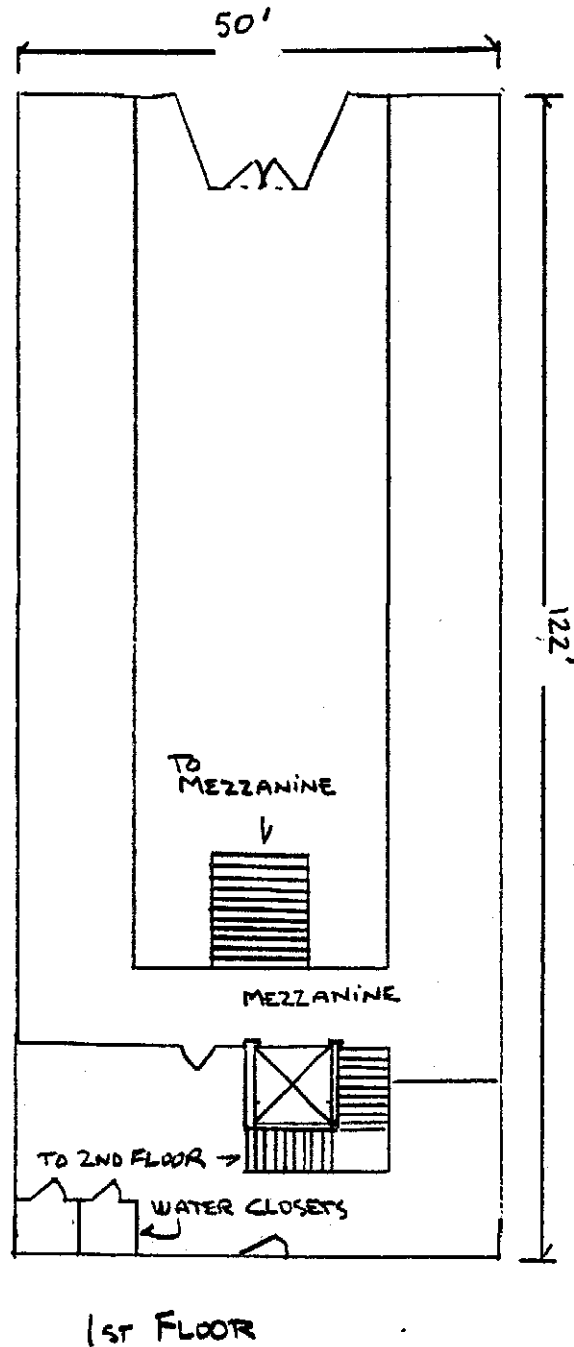
2. **Secondary and published sources:** (Boise) Idaho Statesman, August 18, 1909, p. 5, c. 4; November 8, 1909, p. 5, c. 1-2 (sketch).

Polk and Company. Boise City Directories. 1909-10, 1911.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

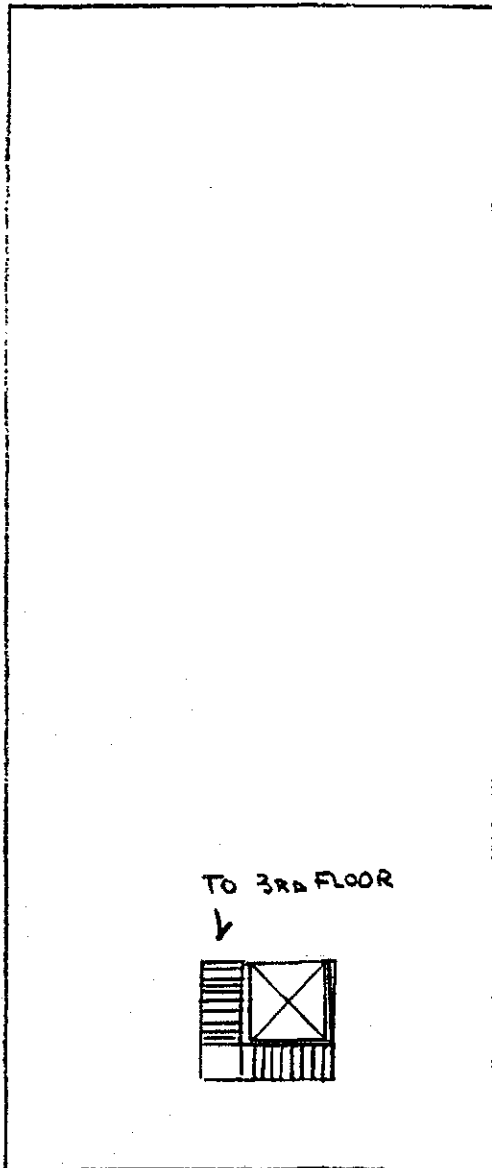
The recording of the Pierce and Company Allen-Wright Building is a mitigative recording which is required by a Memorandum of Agreement between the Idaho State Historic Preservation Officer, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the Capital City Development Corporation. The Idaho State Historical Preservation Office, the Capital City Development Corporation, the Janss Corporation, and The Evans Company were involved in the preparation of this report. These records were prepared on January 5, 1995.

Prepared by:	Stephen M. Evans
Title:	Consultant
Affiliation:	The Evans Company
Date:	January 5, 1995
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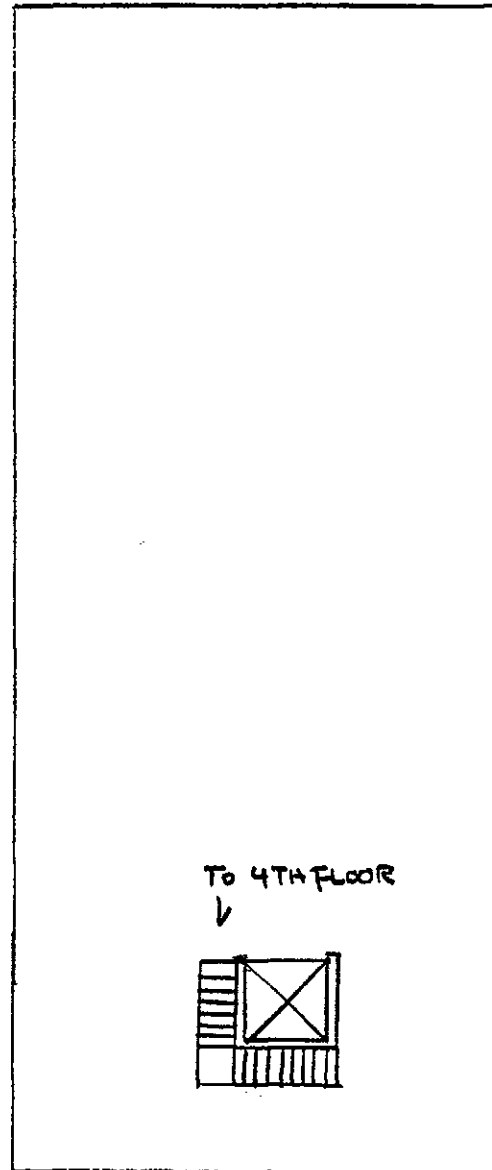


app. 20' = 1"

Address: 817-819 W. BANNOCK
BOISE, IDAHO



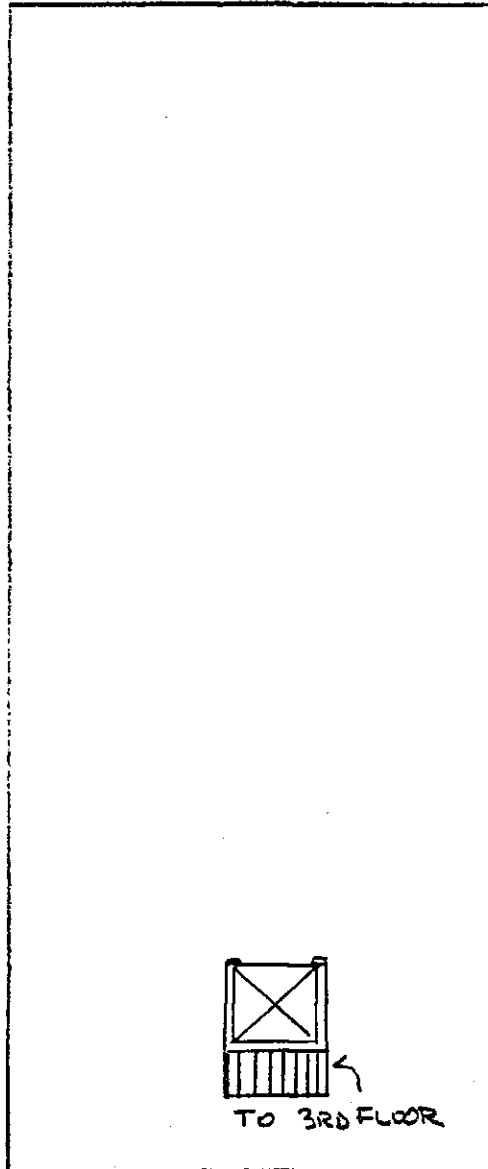
2ND FLOOR



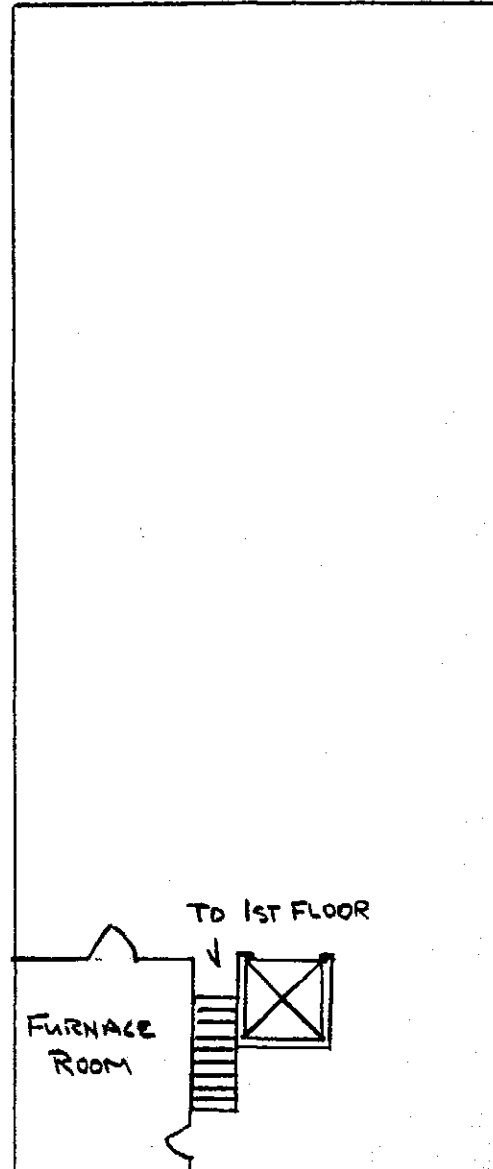
3RD FLOOR

app. 20' = 1"

Address: 817-819 W. BANNOCK
BOISE, IDAHO



4TH FLOOR



BASEMENT

APP. 20' = 1"

Address: 817-819 W. BANNOCK
BOISE, IDAHO